CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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BACKGROUND PAPER PURSUANT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/36 L, "TRANSPARENCY IN ARMAMENTS"

ADDENDUM

Note by the Secretariat

As requested at the informal meeting of the Conference devoted to the agenda item on "Transparency in armaments", hereto attached is the text of the "Guidelines and Recommendations on objective information on military matters", adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its substantive session in May 1992.*

* Extracted from A/CN.10/1992/CRP.3, Annex.

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ANNEX

Guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters

1. In order to promote increased openness and transparency on military matters and to assist greater comprehension of the dangers of the arms race in all its aspects and of destabilizing accumulations of arms inconsistent with legitimate security needs and to contribute to faster progress towards the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant paragraphs of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2); taking into account the Guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level, as adopted by the Commission at its 1988 substantive session, and relevant General Assembly resolutions, has developed the following guidelines for objective information on military matters.

Objectives

2. Objective information on military matters, though not an end in itself, may, through a dynamic process over time, serve among others the following purposes:

- To encourage openness and transparency on military matters in order to build confidence, enhance mutual trust and contribute to the relaxation of tension and to promote specific disarmament agreements and other concrete disarmament measures;

- To facilitate the process of arms limitation, reduction and elimination, as well as reduction of armed forces, and the verification of compliance with obligations assumed in these areas;

- To assist States in determining the level of forces and armaments sufficient for an adequate defensive capability;

- To increase the predictability of military activities and to avert crises and reduce the risk of military conflict, whether intentional or unintentional, by heading off dangerous errors or misperceptions which could generate or precipitate them;

- To promote greater public understanding and discussion of disarmament and security-related issues;

thereby leading to strengthened international peace and security, global as well as regional, and providing undiminished security of all States at the lowest possible level of armaments.

Principles

3. The Charter of the United Nations must be strictly observed. The purposes and principles of the Charter enshrined in Articles 1 and 2 are particularly relevant in the context of the provision of objective information on military matters.

4. Actions of States relating to objective information on military matters should be governed by the following:

- All States have the responsibility to provide objective information on military matters and the right of access to such information;

- The provision of objective information on military matters should be based on the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, which includes not only armed intervention but also other forms of interference;

- Objective information on military matters should be made accessible to the public of all States to the maximum degree possible consistent with national security and the provisions of related agreements;

- Bearing in mind the duty of all States to provide objective information on military matters, the States with the largest and most sophisticated arsenals have a special responsibility in providing information;

- Measures to promote openness and transparency in military matters, at both the global and the regional level, should take into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments;

- The provision of objective information on military matters, in the regional context, should take account of the specific characteristics, degree of stability and political climate in each particular region in relation to the practical level of information necessary to promote openness and transparency, with the aim of contributing to confidence and stability;

- Any field of military activity, component of armed forces of States or their armaments, whether on their own territories, territories of other States or elsewhere, including outer space or the high seas, could be considered for the provision of objective information on military matters, including on nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and conventional weapons, as appropriate;

- States should promote, through consultations on their own initiative, practical measures on the exchange of objective information on military matters, in light of their specific situation and political, military and security conditions;

- The priorities in disarmament established by the General Assembly in paragraphs 45 and 46 of the Final Document of its Tenth Special Session should be duly taken into consideration, whenever applicable measures relating to objective information on military matters are taken;

- The information to be provided under agreements or arrangements for the exchange of objective information on military matters should be consistent in volume, range and quality with the objectives identified by the parties. The data should be accurate, comparable, and provided on a reciprocal basis and may, if deemed necessary by the parties, be subject to verification;

- Exchange of information in the context of disarmament agreements or measures should be designed to meet the specific provisions of such accords;

- Information obtained under specific agreements may be restricted to the participants;

- Measures to promote openness and transparency may be unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, subregional, regional or global, and may use the potential of the United Nations;

- Such measures should be carried out in harmony with other efforts to build confidence, to promote disarmament and to strengthen security;

- As an important confidence-building measure, the provision of objective information on military matters can both promote, and in its turn be promoted by, improvement in the political climate among States concerned.

Scope

5. The potential for increase of openness and transparency through provision or exchange of objective information on military matters in all its aspects is as wide as the whole military field. The scope of any particular exercise will depend on the objective pursued and should be defined in accordance with the foregoing principles through consultations on an equal footing by parties concerned and can be adjusted, as necessary, upon their agreement.

Mechanisms

6. The foregoing objectives should be pursued in accordance with the foregoing principles through a range of mechanisms to promote the provision of objective information on military matters in a comprehensive and equitable manner, both within the United Nations system and outside it.

7. The United Nations should promote the provision of objective information on military matters inter alia through:

- Relevant guidelines and other recommendations developed by the Disarmament Commission (UNDC);

- Collection and publication of information on military budgets provided by Member States on the basis of its standardized reporting system or possible future improvement thereof;

- Maintenance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms;

- United Nations studies carried out in accordance with General Assembly resolutions;

- Related activities of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament;

- Research performed under the aegis of the Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR);

- Operation of appropriate databases in accordance with the provisions of relevant resolutions and provision of advisory services, if requested by Member States.

In addition, if requested by the parties and subject to the availability of appropriate resources, the United Nations can assist in data collection and dissemination in the context of multilateral treaties on arms limitation and disarmament, as is already the case with respect to the Biological Weapons Convention.

8. The Conference on Disarmament can play an important role in promoting the provision of objective information on military matters through measures agreed upon by its members, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

9. Unilateral measures as well as bilateral, subregional, regional and other multilateral arrangements should also be utilized for the provision of objective information on military matters.

Recommendations

10. In the light of the foregoing objectives and principles, and with the aim of enhancing the security of all States, the following recommendations are offered for consideration.

11. The United Nations Standardized System of Reporting on Military Expenditures, which has attracted a growing number of participating States, should continue in operation and could be further improved as a global basis for the provision of objectively and comprehensively comparable information on such expenditures.

12. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be operated and further developed on the basis of the relevant resolution of the General Assembly and the process set out therein, which is commended to the Member States.

13. States should, in the meantime, take practical measures, on the basis of existing agreements, where applicable, and within appropriate forums, to increase openness and transparency in military matters through the provision of objective information, including on nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, the transfer of high technology with military applications, imports and exports of conventional arms, military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies.

14. Individual States and groups of States should consider formulating arrangements, freely arrived at between themselves, to promote the direct flow and exchange of information.

15. The General Assembly should consider the establishment of groups of experts to study ways and means of ensuring greater comparability of nationally supplied data. The objective of greater comparability could also be promoted through the exchange of information and cooperation among interested Member States on statistical methods.